

1962 ANNUAL REPORT

LOWELL PLANNING DEPARTMENT



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The Planning Department presents in this report a resume of its accomplishments and activities during the past year. In the absence of a director from the end of January until the beginning of July, the staff ably provided planning services and made significant progress in the Northern Canal Renewal and the New Industrial Park projects. It is hoped that the contents of this report will enable all persons to better understand the operations and functions of the Planning Department.

I. URBAN RENEWAL

An important aspect of the Planning Department's function is planning redevelopment and renewal projects and related programs.

A. Church Street Redevelopment Project

The Planning Department provided planning services to the Lowell Housing Authority for the Church Street Project. The department, in cooperation with the Lowell Housing Authority and the developers of the Church Street Project, also participated in the official opening of the Church Street Project with the presentation of exhibits and talks relating the historical background of the development and benefits of urban renewal programs in the city.

B. Northern Canal Renewal Project

Part I of an Application for Loan and Grant was submitted in July of 1961 to the Urban Renewal Administration of the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), but due to the complexity of the Northern Canal Project involving conservation, rehabilitation and clearance and



land reuses, final approval of the application was not received until June of 1962.

Subsequent revisions to the Urban Renewal Plan, and maps were made by the Planning Department, and a public hearing for the Northern Canal Project was held on August 7. Thereafter, Part II application for Loan and Grant was submitted to regional office of HHFA early in October and is presently under review. From all indications the project will be in execution in February of 1963.

By that time, upon approval of the Northern Canal Project, the Lowell Housing Authority will transfer its responsibility of the administration of the project to the Lowell Redevelopment Authority, which will assume the responsibility for this and all future renewal projects in the city.

For the services rendered by the Planning Department in connection with the planning of the Northern Canal, the Lowell Housing Authority paid the City the sum of \$15,200 which was deposited in the General Funds.

C. Acre and Hale Street General Neighborhood Renewal Plan Applications

The regional office of HHFA has informed the City that it will hold in abeyance the review of the Acre and Hale Street general neighborhood renewal plans until a meeting can be held in the future between the city and federal officials to discuss the overall program for Lowell. The regional office feels that this is for the best interest of the City at this time since the pending Northern Canal Project alone represents a sizable project.

D. Workable Program

The Planning Department updated and resubmitted the City's



Workable Program to HHFA in June and the City received a recertification in late August. It is timely again to stress this importance on the City to update and resubmit the document each year in order that it may retain its eligibility for continued federal aid. In the resubmission of the Workable Program, the City committed itself to undertake the following positive actions:

1. To intensify code enforcement within the city  
(the City will be required to present evidence as a result of this action to the HHFA for the next recertification).
2. To form a committee to study relocation.
3. To prepare a report on characteristics of families affected by poor housing.
4. To identify the steps needed to eliminate present blight and prevent future blight.
5. To revise and update the Zoning Ordinance and the Building Code.

Work in this direction has gained momentum.

## II FEDERAL URBAN PLANNING ASSISTANCE - 701 PROGRAM

The Planning Department is in the process of filing an application for a planning grant for urban planning work. This 701 Program will enable the City to update its General Plan which had previously been presented as a preliminary plan in 1956. The Plan will be comprehensive in nature and will contain such major elements as land use, thoroughfares, community facilities and capital improvements program, based on the needs of the community. The program will also enable the City to revise its antiquated zoning ordinance, and prepare new



city maps. It is estimated that a period of one to one-and-one-half years will be required to complete this planning project for which the federal government will contribute 75% of the total cost and the City 25% either in cash or in services.

### III COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAM

The Planning Department is also contemplating undertaking a Community Renewal Program (CRP), a new program authorized in the 1959 Housing Act. Realizing that piece-meal renewal is no satisfying solution to a community if it is to have a long-term renewal program, the new legislation is designed with federal assistance to approach the renewal problems on a community-wide basis. The intended purpose of the CRP is to

1. Identify all of the deteriorating, deteriorated, blighted, or slum areas, both residential and non-residential.
2. Analyze the nature and degree of blight and blighting factors.
3. Determine clearance, conservation, reconditioning or other urban renewal action needed, and general indication of appropriate land uses.
4. Evaluate the locality's requirements for urban renewal action with respect to:
  - (a) Financing
  - (b) Relocation of displaced families
  - (c) Potential rate of disposition and utilization of cleared land.
5. Develop a long-range program for urban renewal action.



A community renewal program for Lowell will take approximately two years to accomplish and the government will pay two-thirds of the cost for such a program. Again the City's share of one-third may be in cash or in services.

#### IV PLANNING BOARD, ZONING AND SUBDIVISION CONTROL

In 1962, the Board met 9 times and held 22 public hearings on zoning changes and subdivisions as required by law. A total of 16 individual zoning petitions were heard, 7 were recommended for approval and 8 disapproval. One zoning petition was withdrawn.

Six subdivisions were approved by the Board, which contained a total of 147 building sites. Seventy-two plots on existing public ways were signed by the Planning Engineer of the department and the City Engineer stating that approval under subdivision control law was not required.

One of the Planning Engineers has been acting as secretary ex-officio to the Lowell Planning Board.

#### V PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM OF AREA REDEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (ARA)

The approval of the Overall Economic Development Program for the Lowell Standard Metropolitan Area, prepared by the Planning Department in 1961 has enabled the city of Lowell and its five surrounding communities (Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Tewksbury and Tyngsborough) having a population of 160,000 and an area of 119 square miles, to be eligible for special federal benefits in the form of federal loans and grants both to public and private agencies. Already this program has accrued many benefits for the area.

The first industrial development loan in New England was to a newly organized electronics plant in Lowell employing 110 workers.



The loan was for \$100,000. The second industrial development loan in New England was to a new plant in Tewksbury. Initial employment was 100 with future employment of 325. The loan was for \$487,000. Another Lowell plant received a \$29,250 industrial loan. Forty new jobs will be created. There have now been three retraining classes conducted in the Lowell Trade School. Forty-eight workers have been retrained for new employment opportunities.

The Planning Department has applied and received a capital grant of \$212,000 as the first increment to provide sewer, drainage, water and road facilities in Industrial Park. The second increment also requesting a grant of \$212,000 has been submitted in August of 1962 for the extension of public facilities in Industrial Park.

The ARA program also has certain advantage to Lowell's urban renewal programs. Before June 1961 when Lowell area was not categorized by ARA as a locality of substantial and persistent unemployment, the government would contribute only two-thirds of the renewal project cost instead of the three-fourths under the ARA program. In addition, the restriction that all areas scheduled for urban redevelopment must be predominantly residential in character before renewal has been removed under the ARA program.

## VI ACCELERATED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM

Since the enactment of the federal legislation in September 1962, authorizing a sum of \$900 million to be used to accelerate public works with the purpose of providing immediately relief to unemployment, the Planning Department has filed twelve applications requesting a 50% federal grant for various public works projects. The projects submitted by the Planning Department are listed as follows:



<u>Fed Proj. No.</u>	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Date Submitted</u>	<u>Grant Requested</u>
APW-Mass.			
25G	South Lowell Sewer	October 23, 1962	\$ 422,000
34G	John St. Parking Deck	November 1, 1962	146,000
39G	Pawtucket Bridge	November 2, 1962	36,000
40G	Aiken Street Bridge	November 5, 1962	162,000
43G	South Common Recreation	November 7, 1962	79,500
47G	Memorial Auditorium	November 21, 1962	58,500
48G	City Hall Improvements	November 21, 1962	51,000
50G	Public Works Department Building	November 27, 1962	250,000
52G	Merrimack River Recreation	December 5, 1962	128,500
53G	Police & Fire Dept. Bldg.	December 6, 1962	794,000
54G	Health & Welfare Bldg. & Library repairs	December 7, 1962	628,000
Unassigned	Construction of Streets, Sidewalks and Water Mains	December 19, 1962	<u>175,000</u>
12	Projects	TOTAL GRANT REQUESTED \$2,930,500	

## VII CENSUS TRACT STREET DIRECTORY

The Planning Department with the cooperation of the Greater Lowell Community Council and volunteers from the five surrounding communities published a Census Tract Street Directory in June. The information so arranged in the directory will simplify the use of the census tract system and permit easy tabulation and correlation of data and statistics by all community agencies and groups relying on census information. This directory, as a tool for geographical analysis, is essential to the study of basic units of the City by business, welfare and health organizations and other agencies responsible for the plan-



ning of the municipality and the metropolitan area.

#### VIII COORDINATION WITH CIVIC GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

In addition to coordinating planning activities among municipal agencies, the Planning Director and staff worked also with the following civic groups and committees during the past year in the preparation of maps, charts, reports and lectures to properly assist these groups:

1. Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce
2. Greater Lowell Home Builders Association
3. Greater Lowell Area Planning and Development Committee
4. Greater Lowell Technical Committee on Training
5. Lowell Incinerator Committee
6. Lowell Industrial Development Commission
7. Lowell Housing Authority
8. Lowell Redevelopment Authority
9. Citizens Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal
10. Route 495 Association
11. Lowell Advisory Public Parking Commission
12. Tewksbury League of Women Voters
13. Babson Business Institute in connection with  
Industrial Development Survey of Lowell under  
grant of ARA
14. Peter Reilly School P.T.O.
15. Blatnik Committee on Road Investigation
16. Recreation Commission



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